

REMARKS


Independent claims 1, 16, and 18 are amended to include limitations of claims 3 and 20, which were indicated as being allowable. Dependent claims 5, 7, 22, and 24 are amended for consistency with the amended base claims, and claims 3, 6, 11, 20, and 23 are cancelled. The amendments are made for the purpose of expediting prosecution and not for patentability, and the claim cancellations are made without prejudice. Applicants reserve the right to pursue the subject matter of the original claims (prior to amendment) and the subject matter of the canceled claims in subsequent prosecution. Claims 1-2, 4-5, 7-10, 12-19, 21-22, and 24 remain and are thought to be patentable over the cited prior art.

The rejection of claims 1-2, 4, 6, 11, 16-19, 21 and 23 are being anticipated under 35 USC §102(b) by "Duboc" (U.S. Patent No. 6,425,116 to Duboc et al.) is respectfully traversed. However, the rejection is now moot in view of the amendments to the claims. Therefore, the rejection should be withdrawn and all claims allowed.

CONCLUSION

Reconsideration and a notice of allowance are respectfully requested in view of the amended claims and Remarks presented above. If the Examiner has any questions or concerns, a telephone call to the undersigned is invited.

Respectfully submitted,


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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450, on March 2, 2006.

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